

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-07

SAM-01 SSM-03 IO-13 /088 W
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O R 081424Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1720

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: PHALANGE-SYRIAN TALKS

REF: DAMASCUS 5958

1. SUMMARY: LEBANESE PHALANGE PARTY DELEGATION HEADED BY PIERRE GEMAYEL VISITED DAMASCUS SEP 6 FOR EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD, FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AND VICE-MINISTER OF DEFENSE JAMIL. DISCUSSIONS FOCUSED ON PRESENT POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION IN LEBANON. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, GEMAYEL STEERED CLEAR OF INSTITUTIONALIZED SYRIAN-LEBANESE ARRANGEMENTS, BUT SYRIANS PRESSED HARD FOR CREATION OF NEW LEBANESE ARMY COMMAND WITH HEAVY SYRIAN INFLUENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL, ACCOMPANIED BY A
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NUMBER OF PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBERS VISITED

DAMASCUS VIA SYRIAN MILITARY HELICOPTER SEP 6, RETURNING TO BEIRUT SAME DAY. ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT, GEMAYEL MET WITH PRESIDENT HAFIZ ASSAD FOR THREE HOURS WHILE OTHERS OF HIS PARTY MET WITH SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM AND VICE-MINISTER OF DEFENSE GENERAL MAJI JAMIL.

3. ACCORDING TO BOTH L'ORIENT AND AS SAFIR, AGENDA OF SEVEN TOPICS LAID OUT BY SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM WAS DISCUSSED:

A. REORGANIZED LEBANESE ARMY. SYRIANS WANT PARTICIPATION BY (SYRIAN-CONTROLLED) "VANGUARDS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY." L'ORIENT SAYS VANGUARDS WOULD BE CENTRAL CORE OF NEW COMMAND. PAPER SAYS GENERAL JAMIL AND AMIN GEMAYEL OF PHALANGE DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE SEPARATELY, AND JAMIL PROPOSED A DETAILED PLAN, INCLUDING NAMES AND RANKS OF A NUMBER OF LEADING OFFICERS.

B. SARKIS' ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE. SYRIANS REPORTEDLY WOULD LIKE TO SEE PARLIAMENTARY SWEARING-IN SESSION TAKE PLACE AT PARK HOTEL, CHTAURA, IN SYRIAN-CONTROLLED LEBANON. THIS WOULD FACILITATE PRESENCE OF SOME 25-30 LEBANESE DEPUTIES NOW RESIDING IN DAMASCUS. ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT, NATIONAL MUSEUM ON BEIRUT CONFRONTATION LINE AND MANSOUR VILLA (PROVISIONAL PARLIAMENT, ALSO ON LINE) WERE ALSO CONSIDERED. GEMAYEL HAD NO PREFERENCES AMONG THE THREE.

C. PHALANGE-PLO TALKS. L'ORIENT QUOTES KHADDAM AS SAYING ARAB LEAGUE "PEACE PLAN NUMBER 4" WAS NOT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

D. NEW GOVERNMENT UNDER SARKIS. ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT AND AN NAHAR, SYRIANS DID NOT ATTEMPT NAME NEW PREMIER, BUT STRESSED HE SHOULD ENJOY WIDE SUPPORT OF ALL PARTIES, BE A TRUE NATIONALIST, AND BE ABOVE CONFESSIONALISM. L'ORIENT AND AS SAFIR SAY THE SYRIANS EXCLUDED RACHID KARAME AS FUTURE PRIME MINISTER.

E. SYRIAN'S NEXT MILITARY STEPS. TO BE DECIDED AFTER CHAMOUN VISIT TO DAMASCUS, EXPECTED SEP 8. L'ORIENT SAYS SYRIANS DO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT RULE OUR POSSIBILITY OF MILITARY ACTION BEFORE SEP 23, BUT IT COULD ALSO BE AFTER THAT DATE.

F. SITUATION IN WEST BEIRUT.

G. SITUATION IN MOUNTAINS AND AROUND JEZZINE. KHADDAM REPORTED AS SAYING PALESTINIANS MAY HOLD THEIR MOUNTAIN FORTRESSES IN THE HIGH METN THROUGH THE WINTER (OTHER

SOURCES DOUBT THIS).

4. L'ORIENT SAYS OTHER TOPICS WERE RAISED AS WELL. KHADDAM INSISTED ON CLOSE PHALANGE-NATIONAL LIBERAL COOPERATION TO FACILITATE SARKIS' TASK BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. SYRIANS BELIEVE "INTERNATIONAL FACTIONS" (WE ASSUME IS MEANT REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS SUPPORTED BY LIBYA AND IRAQ) DO NOT WANT PEACE ESTABLISHED BY SEP 23.

5. NOTABLY ABSENT FROM AGENDA, AND NOT RAISED BY SYRIANS, ACCORDING TO BOTH AS SAFIR AND AN NAHAR, WERE QUESTIONS OF A POSSIBLE LEBANESE-SYRIAN SECURITY AGREEMENT, OR OF A POSSIBLE SYRIAN-LEBANESE-JORDANIAN FEDERATION. GEMAYEL HIMSELF, IN STATEMENT TO PRESS BEFORE DEPARTURE FROM SYRIA, SAID IDEA OF SECURITY AGREEMENT WAS NOT DISCUSSED BUT THAT ASSAD HAD PROMISED TO SUPPORT WHATEVER WOULD SUIT THE LEBANESE IN THIS REGARD. ON FEDERATION IDEA, GEMAYEL SAID HE PREFERRED LEBANON TO BE ON FRIENDLY TERMS WITH ALL STATES AND APART FROM ALL ALLIANCES. L'ORIENT COMMENTED THAT OUTCOME OF MEETING DEMONSTRATES THAT PHALANGE IS STILL WARY OF IDEA OF ANY KING OF INSTITUTIONALIZED SYRIAN-LEBANESE COOPERATION.

6. COMMENT: GEMAYEL'S PILGRIMAGE TO DAMASCUS IS ONE OF SERIES OF VISITS BY LEBANESE PERSONALITIES INCLUDING CAMILLE CHAMOUN ON SEP 8. SYRIANS CLEARLY ARE PRESSING FOR NEW AND EFFECTIVE POLITICAL CONSTELLATION IN LEBANON UNDER SARKIS, BUT ARE AT THE SAME TIME KEEPING THEIR MILITARY OPTIONS OPEN. CURIOUSLY ABSENT, AS REPORTED IN PRESS, WAS ANY DISCUSSION OF PALESTINIAN STATUS OTHER THAN ALMOST CASUAL PASSING REFERENCE TO PALESTINIAN MILITARY POSITIONS IN CENTRAL LEBANESE MOUNTAINS. CHAMOUN CAN BE EXPECTED TO HAVE MUCH MORE TO SAY ON THIS SUBJECT.

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